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Educators, Practitioners Focus on Adapting to Security Environment at 2013 UAPI Summit

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Educators, practitioners focus on adapting to Security environment at 2013 UAPI Summit

Homeland security academics are matching their practitioner peers in adapting to an incessantly shifting array of threats.

That was part of the message as almost 200 participants from 150 higher learning institutions convened September 26-28 at the sixth annual Homeland Security and Defense Educational Summit in Burlington, Mass. The annual gathering is hosted by the Center for Homeland Defense and Security University and Agency Partnership Initiative to broach emerging topics in the field and, as a result, in higher education as well.

This year's theme was "Developing an Adaptive Homeland Security Environment."

"The threat is dynamic, but our community has been just as dynamic if not more so," said UAPI Co-Director Stan Supinski. "We have adapted to what the threat potential is and the Summit reflected that."

Keynote speakers featured Kurt Schwartz, Director of Massachusetts Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency Deputy Administrator and CHDS Executive Leaders Program alumnus Richard Serino and former CHDS Executive Director Paul Stockton, who most recently served as Assistant Secretary with the Department of Defense.

Breakout sessions ranged from more academia-centric subjects such as measuring learning outcomes, to complex philosophical issues such as civilian support to military authorities to contemporaneous case analysis of the April 15 Boston Marathon bombings. The latter case illustrated how practitioners and academics are adapting to emerging threats.

"The bombing showed the cohesiveness in the response community," Supinski observed. "The whole response community came together well. That's something that couldn't have happened 10 years ago."

The Boston Marathon bombing session included three CHDS alumni: Tim Alben, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police, Cmdr. Thomas Lee of the Boston Police Department Criminal Investigation Division and David Carabin, Director of the Boston Regional Intelligence Center.

CHDS instructor Nadav Morag led a plenary session entitled "Terrorism's Old New Face." Members of the panel discussed topics such as the role of women in terrorism and the psychological context that motivates terrorism.

"The decreasing likelihood of wars (due to globalization, the end of Cold War ideological conflicts, etc.) means that terrorism and guerilla warfare are becoming the major outlets for political violence – and hence are likely to increase," Morag said. "I think we're likely to see more incidents of self-organizing terrorism on the part of individuals and small groups and that this terrorism is nearly impossible to prevent because/ while organized terrorism is almost always more destructive, organizations are vulnerable to intelligence penetration."

Complementing the event-driven topics were more philosophical discussions. CHDS graduate Michael Falkow, Assistant City Manager with the city of Inglewood, California, led a panel discussion titled "Homeland Security Educator Update" and made a presentation centered on his thesis, "Does Homeland Security Constitute an Emerging Academic Discipline?" The research outlines characteristics of other academic disciplines, their evolution and builds a model to prove the worth of homeland security as an authentic academic field. With years of funding still providing momentum, Falkow believes the time is ripe to further the field into the doctoral realm, as happened with computer science and public administration in decades past.

"We know academic disciplines get created and evolve just as society evolves," Falkow observed. "How many languages are now extinct? I bet academic disciplines have the same evolutionary life cycles. Now it's time to put together curriculum for a Ph.D in homeland security (in California)."

There were 46 individual presentations, exceeding the number organizers had originally planned because of the high quality of the entries.

"The depth of the discussions has really grown and the rigor of the research and analysis has really increased and matured," Supinski said.

UAPI was created to share CHDS' curriculum with educational and institutions across the country as well as to promote homeland security education in general. More than 300 institutions partner with UAPI, which hosts twice-annual conferences devoted to homeland security faculty and curriculum development.



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